

**MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST
DETERMINATION OF ELIGIBILITY FORM**

NR Eligible: yes ☐
no ☒

Property Name: Bell Motor Company-Used Cars Building Inventory Number: SM-554
Address: 22845 Washington Street Historic district: ☐ yes ☒ no
City: Leonardtown Zip Code: 20650 County: Saint Marys
USGS Quadrangle(s): Leonardtown
Property Owner: Bell Family Partnership, LLC Tax Account ID Number: 002047
Tax Map Parcel Number(s): 288 Tax Map Number: 127
Project: MD 5 Business within Leonardtown Town Limits Streetscape Agency: Maryland State Highway Administration
Agency Prepared By: Maryland State Highway Administration
Preparer's Name: Anne Bruder and Stacey Streett Date Prepared: 12/28/2005
Documentation is presented in: Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Survey Form SM-554 and Project and Review Compliance Files
Preparer's Eligibility Recommendation: ☒ Eligibility recommended ☐ Eligibility not recommended
Criteria: ☒ A ☐ B ☒ C ☐ D Considerations: ☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D ☐ E ☐ F ☐ G
Complete if the property is a contributing or non-contributing resource to a NR district/property:
Name of the District/Property: _____
Inventory Number: _____ Eligible: ☐ yes ☐ no Listed: ☐ yes ☐ no
Site visit by MHT Staff ☐ yes ☒ no Name: _____ Date: _____

Description of Property and Justification: *(Please attach map and photo)*

Note: Please refer to the Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties (MIHP) Form SM-554 for specific information regarding the architecture and historic context.

The Bell Motor Company-Used Cars Building is located on the west side of Washington Street in the commercial center of Leonardtown. The store front faces east and the building is surrounded by a customer and car-storage parking lot. The one-story industrial building is completely clad in variegated red, common-bond brick. It is a gable-front building with a false-parapet roof on the façade. The building is five bays wide and multiple bays deep to accommodate the retail area and car service bays. It extends across the parcel to west where the west elevation is bordered by Lawrence Avenue, which runs parallel to Washington Street.

A combination of large paired and ribbon, plate-glass, aluminum-frame, casement windows flank the centrally-placed entrance on the façade. The double entrance doors are comprised of metal and plate-glass and are shaded beneath a semi-circular awning. The face of the stepped, false parapet above the awning contains a signboard which reads "Bell Used Cars." The fenestration on the side elevations consists of a combination of small, two-pane, metal casement and large, fifteen-pane, metal casement windows.

MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST REVIEW

Eligibility recommended ☐ Eligibility not recommended ☒
Criteria: ☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D Considerations: ☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D ☐ E ☐ F ☐ G
MHT Comments: Compromised integrity.

Jim Tomlinson
Reviewer, Office of Preservation Services

3/23/06
Date

Blum
Reviewer, National Register Program

3/27/06
Date

200600560

The windows provide the necessary ventilation for the service area of the building. A garage bay and a row of multiple casement windows are located on the south elevation. The north elevation is shaded by the overhang of the roof eave, under which is a gallery for parked cars.

The gable roof is sheathed in asphalt shingles, and an interior brick chimney punctuates the west end of the north roof. The chimney rises well above the ridge line.

A hedge of evergreen shrubs borders the front parking lot along Washington Street, and surrounds the roadside signpost. A convenience store and gas station are located north of the Bell Motor Company-Used Cars Building, and St. Peter's Chapel (SM-275) is located south of the business. The historic boundary is confined to St. Mary's County tax parcel 288 on tax map 127.

History

J. Ernest Bell and T. Webster Bell started their franchise business, Bell Motors Chevrolet, on January 17, 1923. However, they built the commercial building located at 22845 Washington Street in Leonardtown circa 1947-1948 to house a farm supply business to meet the demands of veterans returning after World War II. In the early 1980s, they decided to change their business over to the sale of used cars. The conversion of the industries was easily made due to the expansive interior design of the commercial building.

Significance

Based on the information in the 1997 MIHP Form and SHA's field visit, the Bell Motor Company-Used Cars Building is eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) under Criterion A. The building represents Leonardtown's and the nation's growing reliance on the automobile as a mode of transportation and its impact on commerce in the twentieth century. The Bell Motor Company-Used Cars Building is also eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) under Criterion C (architecture). It is a significant example of a post-1940 commercial building in the commercial center of Leonardtown. The architectural design of the industrial building proved conducive to commercial enterprise throughout the twentieth century, as the building originally housed a farming supply store before being converted into a used-car business in the early 1980s. Commerce in Leonardtown increased after the end of World War II and the opening of the Patuxent Naval Air Station in St. Mary's County. Research did not indicate that persons significant under Criterion B have been associated with the Bell Motor Company-Used Car Building. Criterion D was not investigated as part of the historic standing structures study.

MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST REVIEW

Eligibility recommended _____ Eligibility not recommended _____

Criteria: ___ A ___ B ___ C ___ D Considerations: ___ A ___ B ___ C ___ D ___ E ___ F ___ G

MHT Comments:

Reviewer, Office of Preservation Services

Date

Reviewer, National Register Program

Date

LEONARDTOWN

SM-554

Bank of America Building
22700 Washington Street
Leonardtown, MD 20650

BM Hospital

St Marys
Academy

Father White
Sch

St Aloysius
Ch

New St Aloysius
Cem

Courthouse

Radio
Tower

Sewage
Disposal

Ryken
High Sch

Camp
Calyert

Foxwell

Run

Town

42°40'

17°30''

42°39'

86

102

2

39

326

95

48

31

5

50

1511 077

RECEIVED
FEB 24 1964
FBI



BELL USED CARS

S. 55d

King's 1880s, LEONARD TOWN

S. 55d

King's 1880s

2/2/85

ART-2611 <NO. 18A>019
167 1717 -1 N N-1-81 (044)0

East of SOUTH FIELDS, LOOKING
NORTH

(12. 1. 1985)

Capsule Summary
SM-554
Bell Motor Company-Used Cars Building
Leonardtown
Private

c. 1947-1948

The Bell Motor Company-Used Cars Building represents a significant commercial building located on Washington Street, just north of the center of Leonardtown, Maryland. The Bell Motors chevrolet franchise, started on January 17, 1923 by J. Ernest Bell and T. Webster Bell, erected the one story common bond brick building in the late 1947-1948 in response to the increase in sales caused by the return of veterans at the end of World War II and the opening and growth of the Patuxent Naval Air Station. This building originally sold mostly farming implements, tractors, and other appliances, but in the early 1980s, the Bell's decided to use the building for the sale of used automobiles.

The brick building easily accomodated this change. Its large and expansive interior easily housed many cars and could also be used for the service and parts department. The casement windows and garage doors on the north and south sides provided adequate ventilation for these functions.

SM-554, Bell's Used Cars Building
St. Mary's County
Maryland Comprehensive State Historic Preservation Data

Historic Context

Geographic Organization:	Western Shore
Chronological/Developmental Period:	Modern, 1930-
Historic Period Theme:	Architecture, Commerce

Resource Type

Category:	Building
Historic Environment:	Town
Historic Function and Use:	Car Sales Office
Known Design Source:	None

MARYLAND INVENTORY OF
HISTORIC PROPERTIES

Maryland Historical Trust
State Historic Sites Inventory Form

Survey No. SM-554

Magi No.

DOE ___yes ___no

1. Name (indicate preferred name)

historic Bell Motor Company-Used Cars Building

and/or common

2. Location

street & number 37-45 Washington Street ___ not for publication

city, town Leonardtown ___ vicinity of congressional district 3

state Maryland county St. Mary's

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
___ district	___ public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	___ agriculture	___ museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	___ unoccupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commercial	___ park
___ structure	___ both	___ work in progress	___ educational	___ private residence
___ site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	___ entertainment	___ religious
___ object	___ in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	___ government	___ scientific
	___ being considered	___ yes: unrestricted	___ industrial	___ transportation
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> not applicable	___ no	___ military	___ other:

4. Owner of Property (give names and mailing addresses of all owners)

name J. Ernest Bell, III

street & number PO Box 656 telephone no.: (301) 475-2355

city, town Leonardtown state and zip code Maryland, 20650

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. St. Mary's County Courthouse liber EWA 1119

street & number folio 17

city, town Leonardtown state Md

6. Representation in Existing Historical Surveys

title

date ___ federal ___ state ___ county ___ local

depository for survey records

city, town state

7. Description

Survey No. SM-554

Condition

☐ excellent
☒ good
☐ fair

☐ deteriorated
☐ ruins
☐ unexposed

Check one

☐ unaltered
☒ altered

Check one

☒ original site
☐ moved date of move _____

Prepare both a summary paragraph and a general description of the resource and its various elements as it exists today.

Contributing Resource Count: 1

The Bell Used Cars Building is located just south of the intersection of Washington Street and Maryland Route 5. This large industrial scale building extends clear from Washington Street to the east to Lawrence Avenue to the west. The relatively level 2.1 acre tract is bounded to the north by a Burchmart convenience store and gas station and to the south by St. Peter's Chapel (SM-275). Well pruned hedges line the east border with Washington Street, but the lot is relatively free of vegetation to allow for the maximum car storage space possible and ample parking for customers.

The building itself is a long, one story, brick industrial building that extends almost one block. The brick walls are laid in an irregular common bond with irregularly colored bricks. The entire roof is sheathed with asphalt shingles and is pierced by a single large chimney stack located on the west gable end of the building.

The primary or east elevation is distinguished by five bays--a centrally located pair of metal and plate glass doors flanked on either side by two large plate glass windows. The doorway is covered by a roundish awning which is topped by a large sign that reads "Bell Used Cars." The top of the wall is stepped indicating that it is actually a false front that hides the large gable roof.

The sides of the building feature a series of small two pane casement windows, garage doors, as well as large fifteen pane metal casement windows. These doors allow cars to be serviced and transferred, while the windows permit cross-ventilation to occur.

The site also contains a large corrugated metal or plastic shelter that covers several cars fronting Washington Street. This shelter is supported by a series of metal posts and shades the cars from light and protects them from rain.

8. Significance

Survey No. SM-554

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates

Builder/Architect

check: Applicable Criteria: ☒ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D
and/or
Applicable Exception: ☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D ☐ E ☐ F ☐ G
Level of Significance: ☐ national ☐ state ☒ local

Prepare both a summary paragraph of significance and a general statement of history and support.

The Bell Motor Company-Used Cars Building represents a significant commercial building located on Washington Street, just north of the center of Leonardtown, Maryland. The Bell Motors chevrolet franchise, started on January 17, 1923 by J. Ernest Bell and T. Webster Bell, erected the one story common bond brick building in the late 1947-1948 in response to the increase in sales caused by the return of veterans at the end of World War II and the opening and growth of the Patuxent Naval Air Station. This building originally sold mostly farming implements, tractors, and other appliances, but in the early 1980s, the Bell's decided to use the building for the sale of used automobiles.

The brick building easily accomodated this change. Its large and expansive interior easily housed many cars and could also be used for the service and parts department. The casement windows and garage doors on the north and south sides provided adequate ventilation for these functions.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Survey No. SM-554

Personal Interview with Tommy Bell, February, 1997.

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property 2.1 acresQuadrangle name Leonardtown, MdQuadrangle scale 1:24 000UTM References do NOT complete UTM referencesA

Zone	Easting	Northing							

B

Zone	Easting	Northing							

C

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D

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E

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F

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G

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H

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Verbal boundary description and justification

Same as per deed reference.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	code	county	code
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state	code	county	code
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11. Form Prepared By

name/title Kirk E. Ranzetta, Historic Sites Surveyororganization St. Mary's County Planning and Zoningdate February 1997street & number 22740 Washington Streettelephone (301) 475-4662city or town Leonardtownstate Maryland

The Maryland Historic Sites Inventory was officially created by an Act of the Maryland Legislature to be found in the Annotated Code of Maryland, Article 41, Section 181 KA, 1974 supplement.

The survey and inventory are being prepared for information and record purposes only and do not constitute any infringement of individual property rights.

return to: Maryland Historical Trust
Shaw House
21 State Circle
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
(301) 269-2438

MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST
DHCP/DHCD
100 COMMUNITY PLACE
CROWNSVILLE, MD 21032-2023
514-7600

SM-554, Bell Motor Company-Used Cars Building

St. Mary's County

8.1 Significance

Chain-of-title (Please note that all records can be found in the Land Records Office, St. Mary's County Courthouse in Leonardtown, Maryland unless otherwise noted.)

Reference: Liber EWA 1119, Folio 17

Grantee: J. Ernest Bell, III, trustee

Grantor: J E Bell et al

Date: December 31, 1996

Notes: According to estate no 5335, the heirs of J. Ernest Bell receive equal shares of his estate that includes the 2.1 acre property and building on 37-45 Washington Street.

Reference: Liber CBG 19, Folio 527

Grantee: J. Ernest Bell, and T. Webster Bell

Grantor: Ida J. Payne, widow

Date: April 22, 1947

Notes: This deed combines a 1 1/2 acre parcel (Parcel #1) and 3/5 acre parcel (Parcel #2). Parcel #1 was located fronting Washington Street, while Parcel #2 was located fronting Lawrence Avenue.

Parcel #1

Reference: Liber JFF 12, Folio 598

Grantee: L. Ernest Payne

Grantor: Alice Morgan

Date: August 25, 1891

Notes: This deed notes that the parcel contains 4 acres. It was probably subdivided later.

Reference: Liber JTB 2, Folio 226-228

Grantee: George C. Morgan

Grantor: H. G. S Key

Date: February 13, 1856

Notes: Key sells a four acre tract bounded on two sides by main roads leading into Leonardtown to George C. Morgan for \$1450. The conveyance also notes that Morgan was already erecting a dwelling on the property at the time the deed was recorded.

Parcel #2

Reference: Liber EBA 12, Folio 113

Grantee: L. Ernest Payne

Grantor: Asa A. Lawrence

Date: October 10, 1913

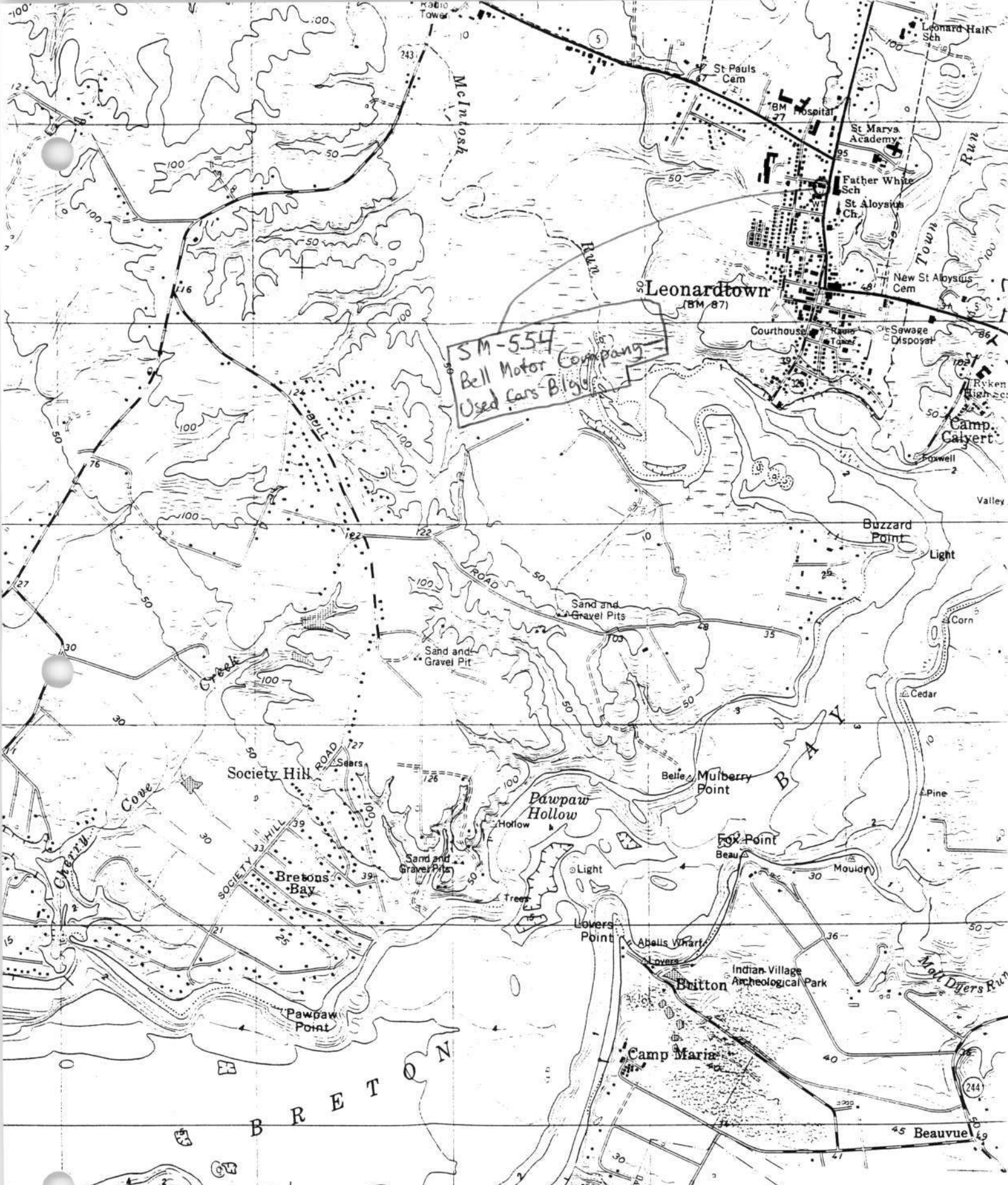
Reference: Liber JFF 4, Folio 361

Grantee: Asa A. Lawrence

Grantor: Joseph H. Key and Robert C. Combs, trustee

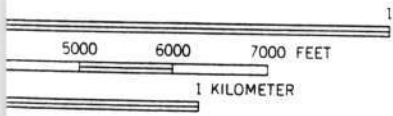
Date: December 2, 1880

Notes: Key and Combs execute a confirmatory deed to clarify ownership of the land by Lawrence. Apparently Maria Key had sold a number of parcels without executing deeds.



SM-554
Bell Motor Company
Used Cars Bldg

LEONARDTOWN, MD.
SW/4 LEONARDTOWN 15' QUADRANGLE
38076-C6-TB-024



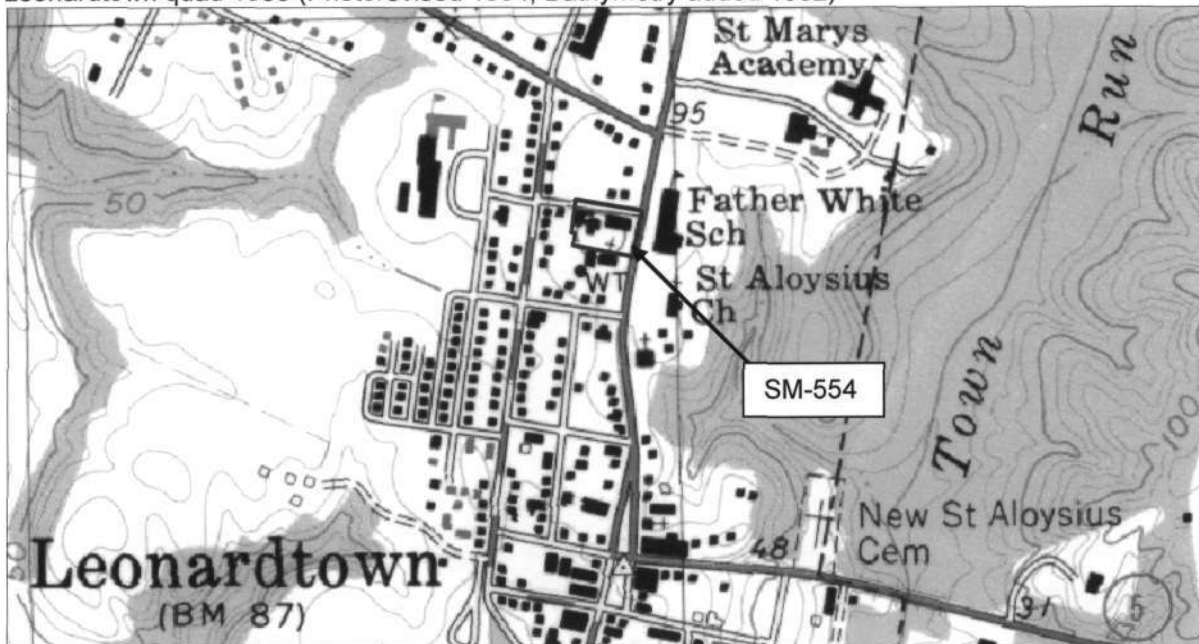
1963
BATHYMETRY ADDED 1982
PHOTOREVISED 1984

SM-554

Bell Motor Company, Used Cars Building

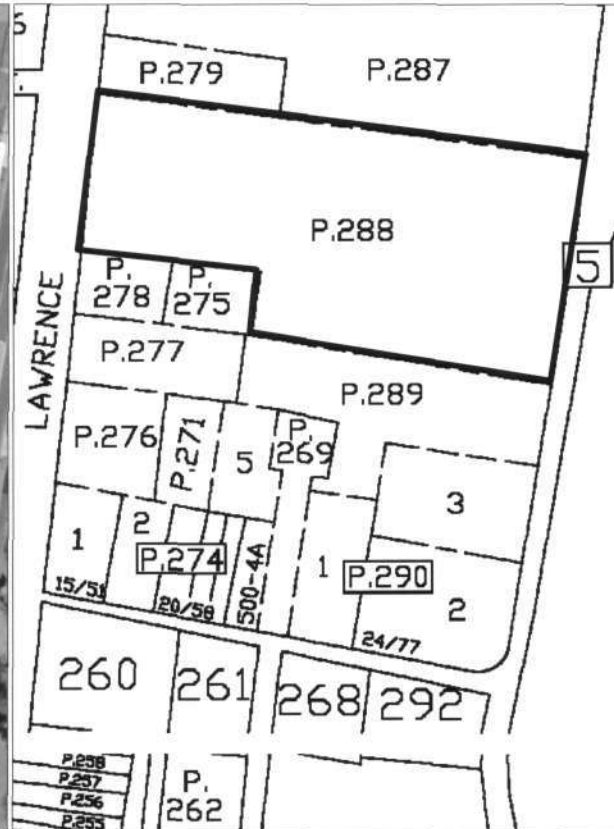
22845 Washington Street (MD 326), Leonardtown

Leonardtown quad 1963 (Photorevised 1984, Bathymetry added 1982)



National Web Map Service 6" Orthophoto Map,
c. 2007-08

Tax Map 127, P. 288





SM-554

Bell's Used Cars Building

St. Mary's County, Md

Kirk Ranzetta

Sept, 1996

Md SHPO

E + N elevations

1/
1